DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 293 815 SP 030 144

AUTHOR Kentta, William
TITLE Organizational Specialists in Public Schools: A Profile. Occasional Paper No. 2.
INSTITUTION National Staff Development Council, Oxford, OH.
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 12p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Change Agents; Elementary Secondary Education; *Organizational Development; *Participant Characteristics; Program Development; *Recruitment; *School Cadres; Staff Utilization; Team Training; *Training Methods

ABSTRACT

This study reports on the findings of a survey conducted to determine why people join school Cadres and to determine the ways in which these groups recruit, select, and train new members. Fifty-two responses were received from Cadre organizations in Oregon, California, New York, Florida, and Idaho. A profile of the typical Cadre member includes information on the most common reasons for joining a Cadre, time allotments for Cadre work, influence as an individual and as a Cadre member on the school district, and personal characteristics. A discussion is presented on how Cadres select and train their new members. Some suggestions are made on improving the recruiting and training methods used by the typical Cadre. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

National Staff Development Council * Occasional Paper Series

ED293815

SP 030144

ORGANIZATIONAL SPECIALISTS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: A PROFILE

by

William Kentta

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

S. Wardens

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Occasional Paper No. 2

When I first joined the Eugene Cadre in 1977, I was attracted by the opportunity to acquire consulting skills in organization and staff development. At the time, I considered Cadre to be some sort of mystic society populated by trained consultants who could make any bad situation a good one. Cadre people were problem-fixers, people who could leap tall buildings at a single bound, and people who could resolve conflict and train others to communicate clearly and effectively. During the past several years I have learned that Cadre members don't leap buildings so much as they "facilitate" discussions about which buildings to leap and how many bounds might be required to accomplish the task. I've also learned that Cadre members do not exist, solely, to resolve conflict; rather, their purpose, their raison d' etre, is to train and lead others who want to change organizational procedures, processes, norms or structures.

During my tenure as an organizational specialist I have been struck by Cadre's ability to remain self-sustaining, particularly since members volunteer their time to serve as part-time trainers while carrying out their full-time teaching or administrative responsibilities. Last spring I decided to gather information from several Cadre organizations in order to (1) determine why people join Cadres (what personal and professional factors influence an individual's decision to join a volunteer staff development group) and (2) determine the way(s) in which these groups recruit, select, and train new members.

I queried five organizations (Eugene, Oregon; Cupertino, California; Buffalo, New York; Bartow, Florida; and Boise, Idaho). In my cover letter I explained the purpose of my study, enclosed a copy of my proposed questionnaire, and asked if there were additional questions I should include in the study. I asked each group to indicate how many questionnaires I should forward. In total, I received 52 completed questionnaires: 7 from California; 11 from Idaho; 13 from Oregon; 20 from Florida; and, one from New York.

A Summary of Findings

Sixty percent of the 52 Cadre members returning questionnaires were between the ages of 31-40. Over 60% of the new Cadre memebers were teachers; almost 30% were administrators, and 10% were classified staff. On the

average, respondents had been in the Cadre for one year. Seventy-one percent of the respondents were females and 29 percent were males. Twenty people were married. Over 70 percent of the Cadre members had at least a master's degree. Fifty-eight percent had been in their present position less than five years. On the average, members had worked in their school districts eleven and a half years; sixty percent of the respondents also said they had worked in other districts (an average of 5 years). Eighty-four percent of the Cadre members indicated they were interested in applying for another job with a higher job classification or salary. Generally speaking, married Cadre memebers appear to be more satisfied with their family, social, personal, emotional, and professional lives than their unmarried counterparts.

Given the results of this questionnaire, the composite picture of the typical new member in a Cadre is as follows:

Sex: Female

Age: 38-42

Marital Status: Married

Position: Teacher

Education: Master's degree (and some additional coursework)

Years in Present Position: 4 (or fewer)

Years in District: 11.6

Years in Another District: 5

One of the questions I asked was "Why did you decide to join Cadre?" Fifty people responded. The reasons most commonly mentioned were:

(Listed in order of frequency)

1. Professional development--the opportunity to learn new skills and techniques. (mentioned by 70% of the respondents)
2. To help others; to help bring about change. (mentioned by 45% of the respondents)
3. To meet others with like interests; for the companionship and support of the group. (mentioned by 16% of the respondents)
4. I was invited to join; I was curious. (mentioned by 16% of the respondents)

When I asked "How much do you want to be an Organizational Specialist?" respondents were directed to provide a numerical rating from "1" (I don't want to be one at all) to "5" (I want to be one more than anyone else does). California members averaged a 3.6 rating on this item; Idaho 3.6; Oregon 4.1; Florida 3.7; and New York 4.0 (one respondent). The average for all groups pooled (n=49) was 3.76. I asked people to indicate on a scale of

1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important) "How important to you is the opportunity to acquire professional skills in organization and staff development?" Among the 52 respondents, 39 (75%) gave this item a "5" rating; 9 (17%) gave it a "4"; 3 (6%) gave it a "3"; and 1 person (2%) gave it a "2". The overall average is 4.65. When I asked "How much previous training have you had in organization and staff development?", 5 people (10%) said "None"; 30 (58%) said "1 or 2 workshops"; 14 (27%) said "1 or 2 university classes"; and 18 (35%) indicated "Other related training." It appears, then, that new Cadre members on the average have had some training in organizational or staff development, that they consider it extremely important, and that they want more training.

When I asked "How important to you is the opportunity to develop social contacts with fellow educators?", I asked respondents for a numerical rating between 1 (Not at all important) and 5 (Extremely important). Among the 52 respondents, 17 (33%) gave this item a "5" rating; 19 (37%) gave it a "4"; 12 (23%) gave it a "3"; 3 (6%) gave it a "2"; and, 1 person (2%) gave it a "1" rating. The overall average is 3.92.

Quite obviously, the opportunity to acquire skills in organizational development is the magnet that attracts the most new people to Cadre. The opportunity to acquire social contacts with fellow educators is important to most new Cadre members, but it is not as important for most as acquiring professional skills. In McClelland's taxonomy of motives (i.e. power, achievement, affiliation), achievement seems to be the strongest motivator.

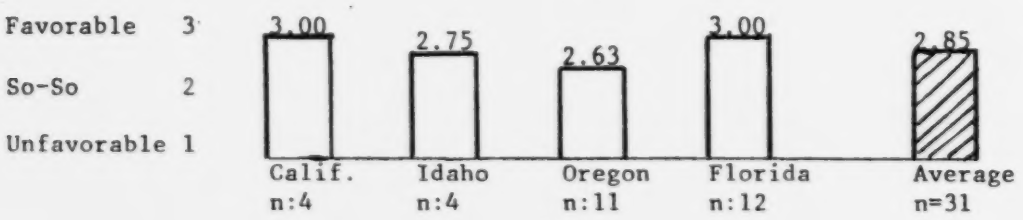
Item Analysis

What follows is an analysis of selected items from my questionnaire.

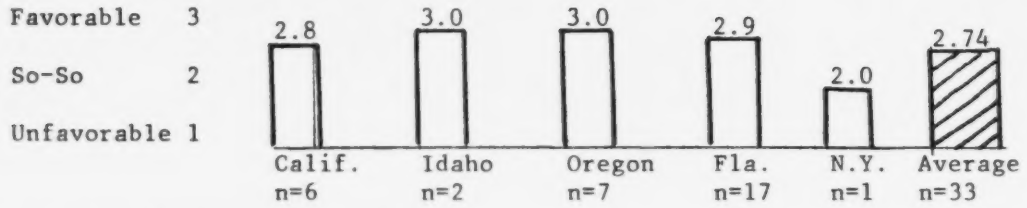
Table 1: Ratings of Informational Sources About Cadre

Below are some other sources from which you may have gotten information about Cadre. For each, please check the impression you got about the Cadre from that source.

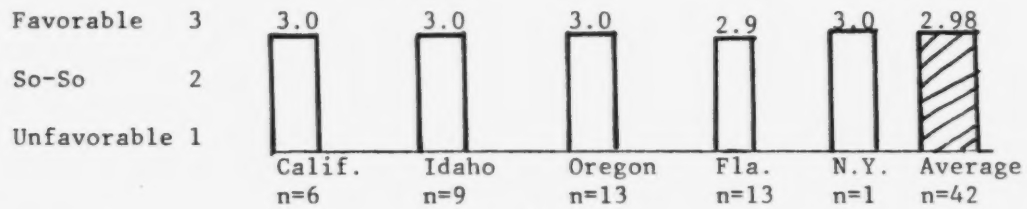
Staff members in building:



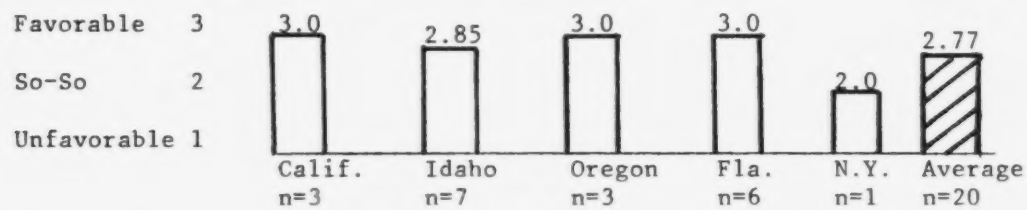
Staff members in district office:



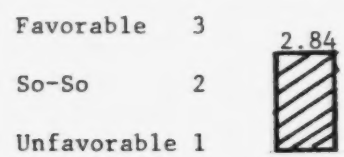
Cadre members who recruited me:



Print information (brochures, pamphlets, etc.)

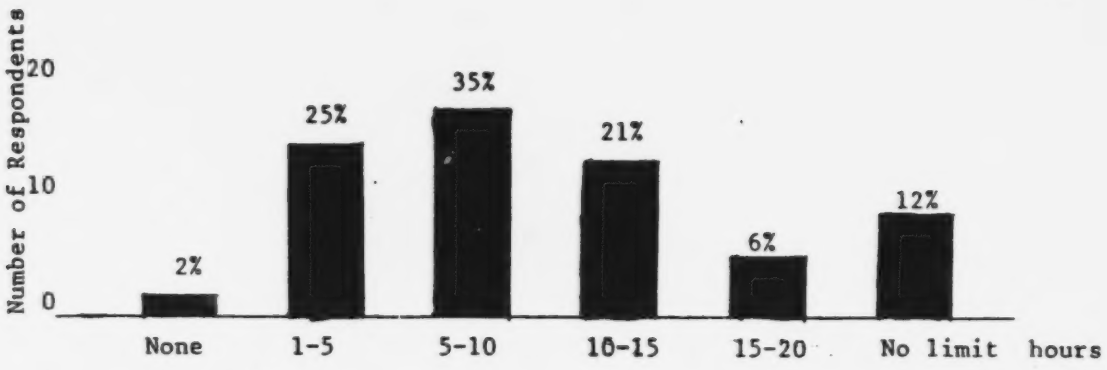


Composite Average, all Categories.



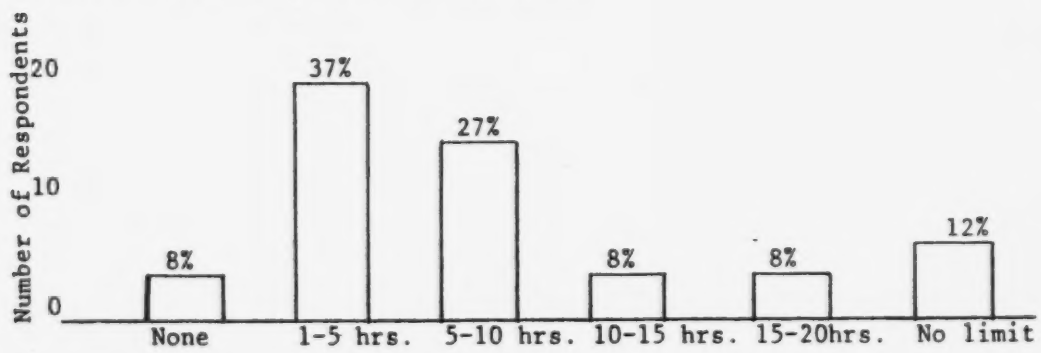
DISCUSSION: Cadre organizations across the nation appear to enjoy a favorable reputation. In terms of recruitment strategies, Cadre members themselves are their own best spokespeople. Staff members in school buildings and staff members in the district office are also favorable sources of information. Relatively speaking, print information is not as effective a means of recruiting new members (less than half the sample chose to evaluate this category, but, among those who did, print information still received a favorable rating).

Table II:2 Time Available for Cadre: All Cadres



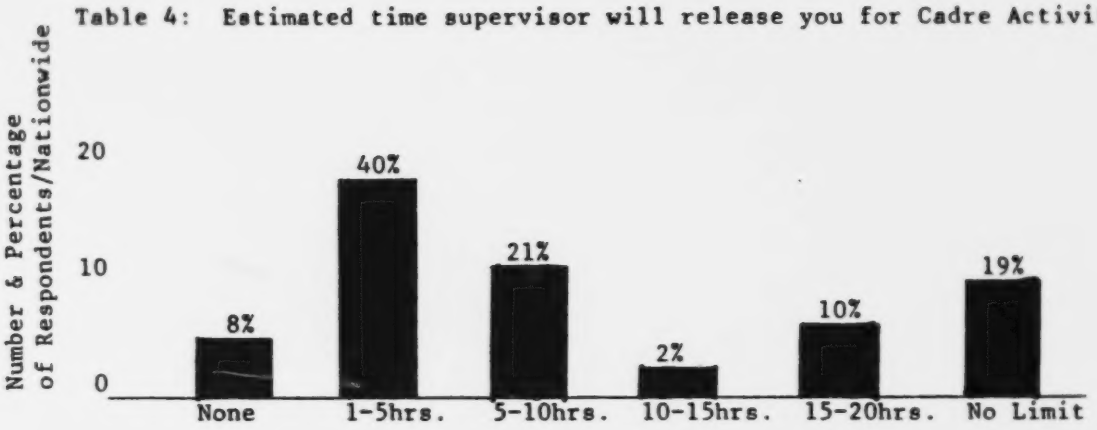
DISCUSSION: Cadre members appear to be willing to allocate 6-10 hours/ month to Cadre. Among all respondents, 13 (25%) said they were available for 1-5 hours/month; 18 (35%) said 5-10 hours; 11 (21%) said 10-15 hours; 3 (6%) said 15-20 hours; and 6 (12%) said there was no limit to the amount of their time they were willing to allocate to Cadre.

Table 3: Time Away from Job for Cadre



DISCUSSION: On the average, most Cadre members said they were willing to allocate 5-9 hours away from their jobs (each month) to Cadre activities. Four people said "None"; 19 said 1-5 hrs; 14 said 5-10 hrs; 4 said 10-15 hrs; 4 said 15-20 hrs; and 6 answered "No Limit".

Table 4: Estimated time supervisor will release you for Cadre Activities



DISCUSSION: These statistics seem to indicate that Cadre members perceive supervisors as willing to provide the same amount of time Cadre members want for Cadre activities. Nationwide, four people responded "None"; 19 (40%) said 1-5 hrs; 10 (21%) said 5-10 hrs; 1 (2%) said 10-15 hrs; 5 (10%) said 15-20 hrs; and 9 (19%) said "No limit".

Table 5:1 Influence in the School District as an Individual

As an individual, how much do you believe you are able to influence the school district and its policies?

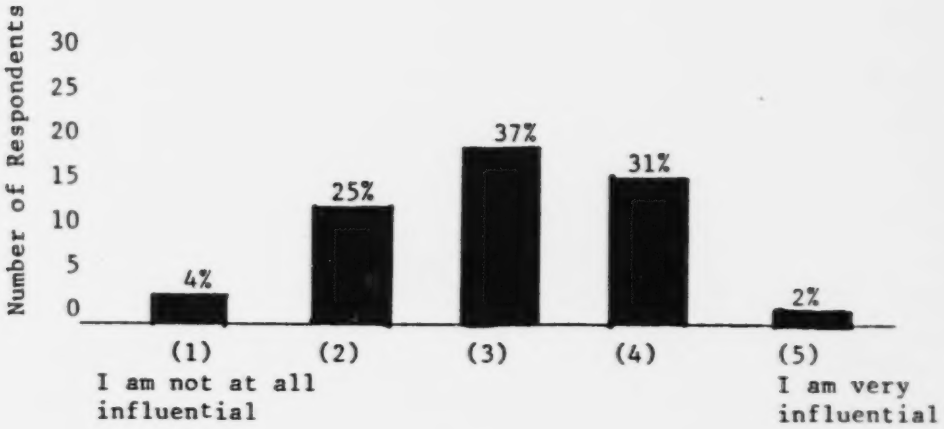
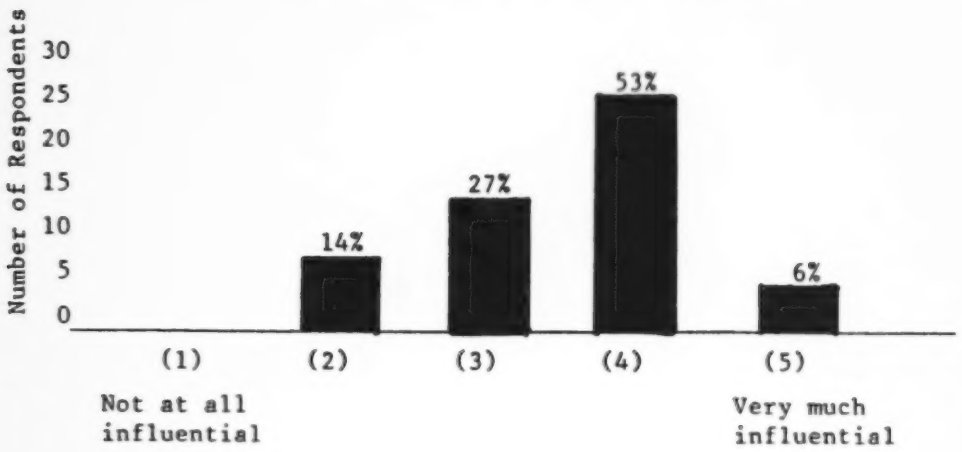


Table 5:2 Influence in the School District as a Cadre Member

As a member of the Cadre, how much do you think you will be able to influence the school district and its policies?



DISCUSSION: A comparison of Table 14-1 with 14-2 suggests that respondents have the perception that membership in Cadre will increase the amount of personal power (or influence) one has in the school district. While only 33% of the sample said they were influential, or very influential as individuals in the school system, 59% believed they would be influential or very influential as Cadre members--almost a 2 to 1 increase.

Table 6: Additional Comments: I have asked respondents to identify questions that should have been asked on the questionnaire, but weren't. The following are the responses I received:

--Does the District support Cadre (to what extent)?

--Can you deal with stress?

--What factors limit time available for interventions?

--How has the Cadre contributed to the system's goals and objectives?

--What skills do you bring to Cadre? How do you see your Cadre experiences vis a vis your professional goals?

--Do you feel that some type of educational credit should be given to Cadre members with over 90 hours of training? Do you feel that a supplemental pay scale is reasonable?

How Cadres Select and Train New Members

In my questionnaire, I asked one person in each organization to describe the ways in which new members are recruited, selected, and trained.

According to James Miles, Director of Staff Development in Polk County Schools, the Florida Cadre does not need to spend much time on recruiting people for its 30 member organization. When the need arises, the Florida Cadre askes area superintendents and principals to recommend people for membership who have high level skills in designing and delivering instruction, interpersonal communication, and a record of continued effort toward personal and professional growth. The training of Florida Cadre members is situational. As Dr. Miles says, "We make some determination about the knowledge and the skills needed for carrying out the Cadre objectives, namely, school improvement efforts, and select, adopt and/or adapt, or design the training activities that we feel will help members gain the knowledge and skills needed to carry out their function." Basic training for Florida Cadre members consists of materials developed by the Northwest lab (i.e. IPC; PETC I, II, III) and other topics like open systems planning, conflict management, and situational leadership.

According to Marilyn Miller, Coordinator of Staff Development in the Cupertino, California Union School District, participants in the Cupertino School Effectiveness Cadre are recruited through the district newsletter and through present Cadre members. Volunteers fill out applications and a membership committee makes recommendations to the Cadre. New members are expected to help maintain a balance of roles, and be recognized by their peers as leaders. Basic training consists of a communications workshop (spread out over a two-year period) and related inservice training. Ms. Miller is currently putting together a "basic training package for new members."

Like the Florida Cadre, training in the Eugene Cadre is situational depending on the needs of the school district. Training of new members is roughly organized into four parts. Part 1 focuses on communication training (data collection, how to teach communication skills, classes in interpersonal communication, group processes and meeting techniques). Part 2 involves general laboratory training (conflict negotiation, leadership styles, management training, facilitating communication throughout observation and feedback). Part 3 consists of private consultations with clients, working

on a one-to-one basis with individuals to develop change strategies. During this part of the training, new members are teamed with experienced members to observe and to lend assistance, where appropriate. Part 4 is esentially a combination of Parts 1-3--an attempt to achieve improvement in the total system.

As the Eugene school district has confronted such issues as school closure, grade reorganization, middle schools, etc., the Cadre has organized its training around these general topics. Every spring, the Eugene Cadre has a two day, out-of-town retreat: part of this workshop consists of specialized training with a hired consultant, and part of the workshop is devoted to team building activities.

In the early years of the Eugene Cadre, new members were recruited in the spring. A notice was sent to district schools; people were asked to complete an application; and applicants were interviewed for selection by our Steering Committee. Today, the Eugene group depends more heavily on word-of-mouth recommendations from the existing membership. People are placed in nomination for membership (once a year) during a general Cadre meeting, and other members have the opportunity to speak for or against that nomination. If at least two people favor a nomination and there are not dissenting votes, nominated people are asked to attend an awareness session with several members. During this awareness session, new members are told what membership in Cadre entails and are given the opportunity to ask questions. After this meeting, applicants also have the opportunity to attend a general Cadre meeting, and meet all of the members. It usually happens that applicants either decide to join (or not join) Cadre after the awareness session.

Limitations of the Study and Conclusions

I regret having to use the word "Cadre" in my questionnaire. At least one person said the term was confusing (and I suspect the word may have confused others). Note: When I first joined "Cadre" I wondered why an organization would choose to use such a military term. I confess that I had to check the dictionary to find out what the word denotes.

I would have liked to have surveyed the people who have been in Cadre for an extended period of time to compare their opinions with those of new members. Given enough time, I think it would be interesting and useful to continue the research initiated in this study by conducting a longitudinal study of the respondents; i.e. a survey to determine why they continue to remain in Cadre, a survey to determine why they leave. Knowing the answers

to questions like these would enable all of us in Cadres to become more adept at recruiting new members and better able to develop strategies for retaining members.

If I were recruiting people to work in an organization and staff development group, I would emphasize the skills and training one could receive in Cadre, and I would depend upon the existing membership to do the recruiting. Most new Cadre members have a concern for upward mobility; most are interested in applying for another job with a higher job classification or salary; and, most have the perception that membership in Cadre increases the individual's power (or influence) in the school district. I would highlight the opportunity for new members to establish social contacts with fellow educators within a support group.